

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 11379 281654Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 EB-07 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 STR-01 OMB-01 CEA-01 COME-00 AGR-05 XMB-02

FTC-01 MC-01 IGA-01 /085 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6338

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 11379

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CU, CO

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER COMMENTS ON CUBAN ISSUE

REF: A) BOGOTA 11276 B) BOGOTA 11378

SUMMARY. DURING A PRIVATE LUNCHEON DEC 27 WITH THE AMBASSADOR, FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO DISCUSSED THE CUBAN QUESTION AT LENGTH. HE SAID THAT THE GOC WOULD MOVE CAREFULLY AND IN STAGES IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH THE ISSUE OF WHETHER AND WHEN TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CUBA. HE DESCRIBED THE RECENT MOVE TO PERMIT COLOMBIAN SUBSIDIARIES OF MULTINATIONAL FIRMS TO EXPORT TO CUBA (REFTELS) AS A VERY LIMITED STEP IN THE FACE OF CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FOR MOVEMENT TOWARD NORMALIZATION, ESPECIALLY IN TRADE. HE SAID VENEZUELA HAS TAKEN THE DECISION TO RENEW DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. PRESIDENT PEREZ INVITED PRESIDENT LOPEZ TO JOIN VENEZUELA, BUT LOPEZ DECLINED. LIEVANO REPEATED THE VIEW THAT US NEUTRALITY AT QUITO HAD CREATED A GREAT DEAL OF HURT AND INDIGNATION IN COLOMBIA AND ELSEWHERE.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 11379 281654Z

FAILURE TO LIFT SANCTIONS AT QUITO TENDED TO

STIMULATE PRESSURE FOR UNILATERAL ACTION; HAD THEY BEEN LIFTED NATIONS WOULD HAVE TAKEN THEIR TIME AND NEGOTIATED HARD BARGAINS WITH CASTRO BEFORE RENEWING RELATIONS. LIEVANO REITERATED THE VIEW THAT THE CUBAN QUESTION WAS A VERY DISTURBING ISSUE IN INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS WHICH COULD NOT BE IGNORED OR PUT ASIDE; HE BELIEVED THAT ACTION TO RESOLVE IT OUGHT TO BE TAKEN AT BUENOS AIRES. BECAUSE HE THINKS THE ISSUE SHOULD BE DISCUSSED AT BUENOS AIRES, HE DOES NOT FAVOR INVITING CUBA TO THE MEETING. END SUMMARY.

1. FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO AND THE AMBASSADOR LUNCHEDED PRIVATELY DEC 27 IN THE COURSE OF A LONG AND VERY CANDID CONVERSATION LIEVANO SPOKE AT LENGTH ABOUT THE CUBAN QUESTION AND COLOMBIA'S RECENT ACTIONS. HE SAID THAT IN THE WAKE OF QUITO CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE HAD DEVELOPED DOMESTICALLY TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CUBA. SOME OF THIS PRESSURE WAS ECONOMIC, I.E. THE URGE TO SEEK NEW MARKETS IN THE SOCIALIST WORLD, INCLUDING CUBA, IN THE FACE OF A FEARED DECLINE IN EXPORTS. DESPITE THIS PRESSURE, COLOMBIA WOULD MOVE CAREFULLY AND IN STAGES IN COMING TO GRIPS WITH THIS OVERALL ISSUE.

2. LIVEANO DESCRIBED THE RECENT MOVE TO PERMIT MULTINATIONAL FIRMS LOCATED IN COLOMBIA TO TRADE WITH CUBA AS A VERY LIMITED INITIAL STEP. IT WAS NOT ACCURATE TO STATE THAT COLOMBIA HAD RENEWED COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA. ALL THAT HAD BEEN DONE WAS TO AUTHORIZE INCOMEX TO DRAW UP REGULATIONS THAT WOULD PERMIT COLOMBIAN SUBSIDIARIES OF MULTINATIONAL FIRMS TO TRADE. NATIONAL FIRMS WERE STILL NOT PERMITTED TO TRADE, A FACT WHICH HAD ALREADY CAUSED PROTESTS BY DOMESTIC BUSINESSES. IN FACT, LIEVANO EMPHASIZED, COLOMBIA HAD DONE ONLY WHAT THE US HAD ALREADY DONE IN THE ARGENTINE CASE. IT WAS CONCEIVABLE HE SAID THAT A SIMILAR SITUATION MIGHT ARISE HERE IF AN AMERICAN FIRM SUCH AS CHRYSLER WANTED TO EXPORT. HE RECOGNIZED THAT US LAW STILL EXISTED AND THAT WE WOULD REVIEW MATTERS ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS (I REFERRED TO THE CURRENT LITTON CANADA ISSUE), BUT HE OBSERVED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 11379 281654Z

STRANGE AND UNTHINKABLE IF AFTER THE ARGENTINE PRECEDENT THE US WOULD REFUSE TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION IN A COLOMBIAN CASE.

3. I POINTED OUT TO THE MINISTER THAT SHOULD TRADE BE RENEWED THERE WERE OLD PROVISIONS IN OUR LAWS REGARDING ELIGIBILITY OF US ASSISTANCE AND I REVIEWED THEM. HE WAS AWARE OF THESE.

4. LIEVANO SAID THAT VENEZUELA HAS DECIDED TO RENEW DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA. CURRENT DISCUSSIONS ARE SIMPLY ON THE MODALITIES OF THE RENEWAL. DURING THEIR AIRPORT CONVERSATION FOLLOWING AYACUCHO (BOGOTA 10929), PRES PEREZ INFORMED PRES LOPEZ OF HIS DECISION AND INVITED COLOMBIA TO ACT JOINTLY WITH VENEZUELA. LOPEZ DECLINED. THE VENEZUELAN ACTION HAS AUGMENTED PRESSURES IN COLOMBIA FOR SIMILAR ACTION.

5. SPEAKING VERY FRANKLY AND FEELINGLY, LIEVANO SAID THAT THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER WAS THAT THE US NEUTRAL POSITION AT QUITO HAD CREATED INDIGNATION AND HURT IN COLOMBIA, WHICH FELT LEFT OUT ON A LIMB. THE US COULD HAVE MADE THE CONFERENCE A SUCCESS; COLOMBIA WHICH ALWAYS CONSIDERED ITSELF A GOOD FRIEND OF THE US HAD HOPED FOR ITS HELP AND COOPERATION. NOW THERE WAS A TENDENCY IN SOME QUARTERS TO WANT TO AVOID THE IMPRESSION OF SIMPLY FOLLOWING THE US LEAD AND APPEAR IN EFFECT TO AGREE THAT THE CUBAN ISSUE WILL BE SETTLED WHEN THE US SAYS IT WILL. FAILURE TO LIFT SANCTIONS HAS PARADOXICALLY STIMULATED THE PUSH FOR UNILATERAL ACTION. HAD THE ISSUE BEEN LAID TO REST AND SANCTIONS LIFTED, NATIONS LIKE COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA WOULD HAVE FELT NO PRESSURE AND WOULD HAVE TAKEN THEIR TIME, PERHAPS A YEAR OR TWO, BEFORE NORMALIZING. HARD BARGAINING COULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH CASTRO.

6. LIEVANO REPEATED HIS OFT EXPRESSED VIEW THAT THE CUBAN QUESTION WOULD ALWAYS CONTORT INTER-AMERICAN RELATIONS AS LONG AS THE SANCTIONS WERE NOT LIFTED. ALTHOUGH THE US HAD EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE MEMBERS WOULD NOT LET THE ISSUE DETRACT FROM MORE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS, THE FACT WAS THAT IT WOULD ALWAYS BE IN THE FOREFRONT. HE BELIEVED THAT THE ISSUE OUGHT TO BE SETTLED AT BUENOS AIRES. BECAUSE IT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED THERE HE DID NOT FAVOR INVITING CUBA TO THE MEETING. UNLESS THE ISSUE IS SETTLED, HE SAID, IT WILL DIVIDE THE HEMISPHERE, GIVE CASTRO A CONTINUING

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BOGOTA 11379 281654Z

CAUSE CELEBRE AND PLAY INTO CUBA'S HANDS. IF THE SANCTIONS WERE LIFTED, THE QUESTION OF CUBA WOULD FADE TO THE RELATIVE NON-IMPORTANCE IT REALLY HAS IN HEMISPHERE MATTERS. NORMALIZING RELATIONS, HE ADDED, DID NOT MEAN THAT NATIONS WOULD FALL PREY TO CUBAN SUBVERSION. COLOMBIA KNEW THAT CUBA HAD TO BE WATCHED; BUT THIS WAS BEST DONE IN A NORMAL INTERNATIONAL POLIT ENVIRONMENT.

7. COMMENT. LIEVANO'S COMMENTS CONFIRM THAT THE GOC HAD IN MIND ONLY A VERY LIMITED MOVE AT THIS TIME, AS MUCH FOR A GESTURE AS ANYTHING ELSE, AND THAT IT INTENDS TO MOVE CAUTIOUSLY AND SLOWLY. IT IS NOT EVEN CLEAR THAT ANY BASIC DECISIONS HAVE YET BEEN MADE REGARDING COMPLETE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH THIS WILL SURELY OCCUR SOONER OR LATER ESPECIALLY IF THE SANCTIONS ISSUE IS NOT RESOLVED AT BA. FOR THE MOMENT, LOPEZ IS KEEPING ALL HIS OPTIONS OPEN. LIEVANO'S COMMENTS ALSO

INDICATE THAT DISAPPOINTMENT AND HURT AT OUR POSITION IN QUITO
CONTINUE TO AFFECT HIM, AND PROBABLY THE GOC GENERALLY. ALTHOUGH
CALM AND RAIONAL ABOUT IT, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE POST-
QUITO IMPACT HAS CAUSED SOME EROSION IN THE GOC'S PERCEPTION OF
US AND SOME FEELING OF HURT AND REBUFF. VAKY

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